



Fraud Newsletter

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Sheriff Steve Mansfield

Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County

*"If it's too good to be true
it normally is"*

PROTECT YOUR ID

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.

Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.

Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County

Lottery Prize Scams

This old scam continues to be on our list of those hitting Lewis County. It starts off with unsolicited mail or phone calls from companies claiming to be holding a large lottery prize for you. The letter will state you have won in an international or out of state lottery and they will be sending you additional information about your good fortune. The initial letter will often ask for you to contact a representative to make further arrangements concerning the collection of your winnings. The follow-up letter will include a check made out to you with instructions to cash the check and return a portion to cover the required taxes. The check will be drawn on the account of a company in the US. The check is a forgery and it's all a scam to steal your money. The scam continues to target the elderly as they are less likely to report their loss due to embarrassment.

Alert from the Washington State Attorney General

Cons Claiming to be Your Pharmacist

"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"

Attorney General Rob McKenna warned Washington residents to be aware of a new identity theft scam in which a caller claims to be your pharmacist and asks for a list of your medications and a credit card number. McKenna also cautioned consumers about a recent proliferation of foreign lottery and counterfeit check scams.

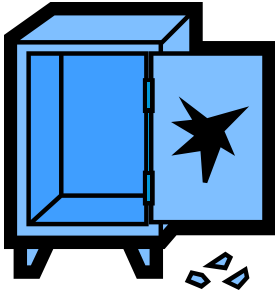
Seniors in Wenatchee, as well as Southern California and Chicago, have recently reported receiving cold calls along these lines. In the Wenatchee cases, the caller(s) had a foreign accent and the recipients were unable to trace the calls by dialing *69.

"Never provide any personal or financial information to an unknown caller," McKenna said. "Cons want details about your finances so that they can steal from your account or cause other harm. Legitimate companies that you do business with already have your information and will not call to ask for it. If you questions about whether a call is legitimate, hang up and contact your pharmacist or doctor directly."

Internet Fraud

"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"

According to the FBI Internet auction fraud was by far the most reported offense, comprising 62.7% of referred complaints. Non-delivered merchandise and/or payment accounted for 15.7% of complaints. Credit/debit card fraud made up 6.8% of complaints. Check fraud, investment fraud, computer fraud and confidence fraud round out the top seven categories of complaints referred to law enforcement during the year. Internet auctions are big business and an easy target for frauds. Remember to take precautions to protect yourself. The following is a short list of things to think about when using Internet auctions:



Avoiding Internet Auction Fraud

- Understand as much as possible about how the auction works, what your obligations are as a buyer, and what the seller's obligations are before you bid.
- Find out what actions the website/company takes if a problem occurs and consider insuring the transaction and shipment.
- Learn as much as possible about the seller, especially if the only information you have is an e-mail address. If it is a business, check the Better Business Bureau where the seller/business is located.
- Examine the feedback on the seller.
- Determine what method of payment the seller is asking from the buyer and where he/she is asking to send payment.
- If a problem occurs with the auction transaction, it could be much more difficult if the seller is located outside the U.S. because of the difference in laws.
- Ask the seller about when delivery can be expected and if there is a problem with the merchandise is it covered by a warranty or can you exchange it.
- Find out if shipping and delivery are included in the auction price or are additional costs so there are no unexpected costs.
- There should be no reason to give out your social security number or driver's license number to the seller.

Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center - <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page - <http://www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

The Internet Crime Complaint Center - <http://www.ic3.gov/>

Lewis County Sheriff's Office

360-748-9286

Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



*Sheriff Steven Mansfield
Committed to make a difference.*